



**EXPLORING VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS' USE OF CONTEXTUAL TEACHING
AND LEARNING (CTL) IN TRANSLATING
IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS**



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2025

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A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Pendidikan in English Education Department



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Dengan ini mohon agar skripsi tersebut segera dimunaqosahkan.

Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatian bapak/Ibu, saya sampaikan terima kasih.

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MOTTO

“Bersinar bukan tentang sempurna, tetapi tentang berani bangkit setiap hari.”

- Haechan Lee

“Giving up is not in my dictionary.”

- Nobita Nobi, Doraemon

“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”

- Arthur Ashe



ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji pemahaman siswa Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK) terhadap ungkapan idiomatik dalam lirik lagu berbahasa Inggris serta menelaah bagaimana Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) mendukung proses interpretasi mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus eksploratif kualitatif untuk menggali proses pembelajaran siswa secara mendalam. Partisipan terdiri atas empat siswa SMK yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling berdasarkan pengalaman mereka dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris berbasis CTL. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan tugas penerjemahan siswa, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan kerangka CTL Crawford (2001) yang meliputi komponen relating, experiencing, applying, cooperating, dan transferring. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pada tahap awal siswa cenderung menafsirkan ungkapan idiomatik secara harfiah dan sangat bergantung pada Google Translate, sehingga menimbulkan kesalahpahaman akibat keterbatasan paparan, ketidakakraban dengan referensi budaya, dan ambiguitas bahasa. Kesalahan seperti menerjemahkan “heaven” menjadi “Tuhan” dan “bad blood” menjadi “darah jahat” menunjukkan dominasi strategi terjemahan literal. Setelah terlibat dalam pembelajaran kontekstual melalui lirik lagu berbahasa Inggris, pemahaman siswa terhadap makna kiasan mengalami peningkatan. Komponen CTL yang paling menonjol adalah relating dan experiencing, sedangkan applying masih lemah karena terbatasnya kesempatan penggunaan bahasa dalam konteks nyata. Secara keseluruhan, lagu berbahasa Inggris efektif sebagai media kontekstual untuk mengenalkan ungkapan idiomatik.

Kata Kunci : *ungkapan idiom, pembelajaran kontekstual, siswa SMK.*

ABSTRACT

This study explores vocational high school students' understanding of idiomatic expressions in English song lyrics and examines how Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) supports their interpretation. The research employed a qualitative exploratory case study to investigate students' learning processes in depth. Four vocational high school (VHS) students were selected through purposive sampling based on prior experience with CTL-based English instruction. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and students' translation tasks, then analyzed thematically using Crawford's (2001) CTL framework, focusing on relating, experiencing, applying, cooperating, and transferring. Findings show that students initially interpreted idiomatic expressions literally and relied heavily on Google Translate, resulting in misunderstandings caused by limited exposure, unfamiliar cultural references, and linguistic ambiguity. Errors such as translating "heaven" as "Tuhan" and "bad blood" as "darah jahat" illustrate the dominance of literal strategies. After engaging with song lyrics through contextual learning activities, students demonstrated improved understanding of figurative meanings. Relating and experiencing were the most evident CTL components, as students linked idioms to personal experiences and song contexts, while applying remained the weakest due to limited opportunities for authentic language use. Overall, English songs function as an effective contextual medium for introducing idiomatic expressions in vocational high school contexts.

Keywords : *idiomatic expressions, contextual learning, VHS students.*

PREFACE

Thanks and appreciation, the author prays to Allah SWT, who has showered me with His grace and blessings, including patience, health, and guidance, so that I can finish writing my thesis, "Exploring Vocational High School Students' Use Of Contextual Teaching And Learning (CTL) In Translating Idiomatic Expressions." It is submitted to the English Education Department at UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan to fulfill one of the requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan in English Education. This thesis study was able to be completed due to a lot of support from several people. Therefore, on this occasion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to:

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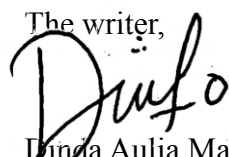
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of The Study

Vocational high schools (VHS) hold a unique position in Indonesia's education system by emphasizing practical skills alongside academic knowledge. One distinctive approach in SMKs is integrating creative media, such as songs, to enhance students' translation skills. Using songs as a medium for translation practice offers an engaging, contextual teaching and learning experience that allows students to explore idiomatic expressions within authentic language contexts (Setiawan, 2020). This method not only motivates learners but also bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, an essential aspect of vocational education.

Translation activities involving songs require learners to interpret idiomatic language that often cannot be translated literally. In this context, Contextual Teaching Learning (CTL), which emphasizes learning through meaningful experiences, becomes highly relevant. Johnson (2002) explains that CTL integrates content with students' life context, enabling them to connect knowledge with its applications. By applying CTL, students learn idiomatic translation not only through theory but also through practical, authentic, and situational tasks.

Moreover, CTL highlights key strategies such as relating, experiencing, applying, cooperating, and transferring knowledge (Crawford, 2001). These approaches assist students in dealing with cultural nuances and figurative language in idiomatic expressions. By engaging with songs, learners experience real contexts, collaborate with peers, and directly apply translation skills meaningfully. These practices allow deeper comprehension and more sustainable skill development.

Effective translation skills are crucial for vocational high school students because they enhance communication abilities and better prepare them for real-world careers. Translation bridges languages, enabling accurate idea expression, vital in vocational fields. Developing these skills also boosts cognitive abilities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and cultural understanding (Hatim & Munday, 2004). Furthermore, proficiency in idiomatic translation fosters learner independence and adaptability across diverse communication contexts. Therefore, prioritizing translation skills through contextual teaching and learning is key to preparing vocational students for success in a connected job market.

Translating idioms is essential for clear communication; yet many vocational high school students struggle with this skill due to cultural and contextual complexities. Furthermore, the English teacher at one vocational high school in Pekalongan often assigned translation tasks without providing clear and explicit instruction on effective strategies. This condition led students to rely heavily on literal translation and digital tools, resulting in difficulties in understanding idiomatic meanings. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine students' learning processes and to explore how Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) supports idiomatic translation in vocational high school contexts. Although Contextual Teaching Learning (CTL) has been widely shown to improve language learning, little is known about how students specifically apply CTL strategies when translating idiomatic expressions. This study investigates students' learning experiences with contextual teaching and activities such as songs to address this research gap.

1.2. Identification of The Problem

Based on the description of the background of the problem above, research problems can be identified, including the following:

1. There are many vocational high school students still struggle to understand and accurately translate idiomatic expressions, which are often culturally and contextually bound.

2. There is a need for effective Contextual Teaching and Learning strategies to overcome the challenges students face in translating idiomatic expressions.

1.3. Limitation of The Problem

Based on the description of the background of the problem above, research problems can be identified, including the following:

1. There are many vocational high school students still struggle to understand and accurately translate idiomatic expressions, which are often culturally and contextually bound.
2. There is a need for effective Contextual Teaching and Learning strategies to overcome the challenges students face in translating idiomatic expressions.

1.4. Formulation of The Problem

Based on the background that has been explained, this research is designed to answer the following questions:

1. How do students apply Contextual Teaching Learning strategies to translate idiomatic expressions?
2. What challenges do students face in translating idiomatic expressions through contextual teaching and learning?

1.5. Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding various terms in this study, the researcher provides several definitions related to research as follows:

1. Contextual Teaching Learning (CTL) : In this study, CTL refers to an educational approach relating subject matter content to real-world situations, encouraging students to connect knowledge with their own experiences (Johnson, 2002).
2. Idiomatic Translation : Idiomatic translation is the process of converting idioms, proverbs, fixed expressions, and similar language forms from the source into the target language (Newmark, 1988).

1.6. Aims of The Research

According to the formulation of the problem above, this research aims to find out :

1. To explore how students apply Contextual Teaching Learning strategies in translating idiomatic expressions from the source language to the target language.
2. To identify the efforts and strategies students use to overcome challenges in translating idiomatic expressions through contextual teaching and learning.

1.7. Significance of The Research

1. Theoretical : This study is expected to strengthen understanding of contextual learning and provide more information on idiomatic translation strategies within authentic learning environments.
2. Practical Implications : For English students, especially in translation studies, this research offers insights into strategies for idiom translation through contextual teaching and tasks, enhancing their practical skills and readiness for real-world application.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the final conclusion based on the findings and discussion in the previous chapter. The conclusion highlights the answers to the research questions and summarizes the data. This section also emphasizes the importance of understanding idioms and figurative language comprehension among EFL learners, particularly in the context of using authentic materials like song lyrics.

5.1 Conclusion

This study explored how EFL learners comprehend idioms and figurative expressions in English songs and how they apply critical thinking and contextual learning (CTL) strategies to interpret symbolic meaning. Based on the findings, learners initially experienced challenges in understanding idioms and metaphors, often interpreting figurative expressions literally. For instance, Naula initially read phrases like “hour of darkness” and “firework” as literal rather than figurative, while Tira struggled with culturally rooted symbols such as “ex-lovers” and “poker face”. Similarly, Aras needed guidance to interpret emotional and metaphorical nuances in songs like “A Glimpse of Us” and “You Look Perfect Tonight”.

These difficulties highlight that idioms and metaphors often require contextual understanding and symbolic interpretation, supporting the views of Sutedi (2019), Perrine (1997), and Larson (1998). The study also found that collaborative learning and reflection, as seen in Tira’s discussions with peers, promoted deeper comprehension, aligning with Johnson and Johnson’s (1999) view that peer interaction enhances learning.

Participants showed signs of applied understanding and adaptive transfer, as described by Bransford and Schwartz (1999). For example, after interpreting idioms from songs like “Into You” and “Bad Blood”, Aras could identify similar figurative expressions in other media. Naula also began applying idiomatic expressions like “count on me” appropriately in real-life contexts, linking them to teamwork and emotional support. These findings demonstrate that meaningful interpretation requires critical engagement rather than reliance on tools such as Google Translate, which often fails to capture figurative meaning (Baker, 1992).

In conclusion, comprehension of idioms and figurative language among EFL learners is a complex process influenced by cultural context, symbolic interpretation, and collaborative reflection. Using authentic materials in a CTL framework allows learners to engage deeply with language, gradually improving their ability to interpret, apply, and transfer figurative knowledge to new contexts.

5.2 Recommendation

Based on the findings and discussion above, this study has some limitations. The data were gathered from a small number of participants and focused on specific English songs as learning materials. Therefore, it is suggested that future research:

- 1 Explore idiom and figurative language comprehension with a larger and more diverse sample of EFL learners across different institutions and proficiency levels.
- 2 Investigate additional authentic materials, such as movies, podcasts, or literary texts, to examine the generalizability of CTL-based strategies.
- 3 Examine the effectiveness of specific instructional techniques for teaching idioms and figurative language, including collaborative and reflective activities.
- 4 Analyze learners’ emotional, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies in interpreting figurative expressions to gain a more nuanced understanding of language comprehension.

By addressing these recommendations, future studies can further support EFL learners in developing both linguistic competence and critical thinking skills in interpreting figurative language.

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S1 : UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan